

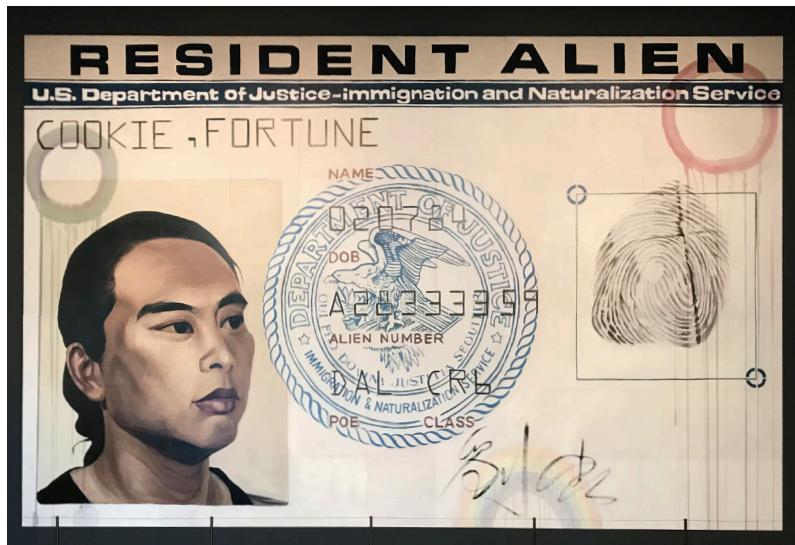
# AMERICAN BORN / RESIDENT ALIEN

## THE LAST HOISAN POETS: A Tribute to HUNG LIU



Saturday, July 2, 2022, 1pm to 2pm  
Wilsey Court, de Young Museum  
Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

**de Young** \\\  
museum



**Hung Liu: Golden Gate (金門)**  
is located in the de Young's Wilsey Court, a space free to the public.

Born in Changchun, China, in 1948, Hung Liu grew up under the Maoist regime. Trained in the Socialist Realist style of painting, she elevates the subjects of archival photographs, re-creating them in the grand scale and lyrical style of history painting. Challenging primary sources, officially sanctioned documents, and revisionist accounts, Liu foregrounds displaced and wandering people frequently left out of traditional historical narratives and resurfaces stories lost to time.

In *Hung Liu: Golden Gate* (金門), her site-specific installation combining existing and new work in Wilsey Court, Liu highlights international and domestic narratives of migration. Reimagining some of her most iconic paintings, such as *Resident Alien*, through the lens of her personal trajectory, she places herself among and celebrates the people who arrived in California from both land and sea.

<https://deyoung.famsf.org/exhibitions/hung-liu>

de Young  
museum

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Saturday, July 2, 2022, 1pm to 2pm, Wilsey Court, de Young Museum

### Introductions/Land Acknowledgment

#### *Jasmine Flower*

by Jiangsu, arr. Zhou Long

performed by Charlton Lee & Kathryn Bates

#### *The Diamond Sutra*

by Genny Lim

#### *Embers*

composed by Charlton Lee

performed by Charlton Lee & Kathryn Bates

#### *Pantoum for the Woman Who Left Cloud Village*

by Nellie Wong

with musical improvisation by Charlton Lee & Kathryn Bates

#### *They are the Rays of Her Sun*

#### *Tamen Shi Tai Yang de Guangmang*

by Flo Oy Wong

with light/leit motif by Charlton Lee

#### *Phrase*

composed by Kui Dong

performed by Charlton Lee & Kathryn Bates

#### *Sister Hoods (For Hung Liu)*

by Nellie Wong

#### *姐妹 Dei Moy: Sisterhood is in the Heart*

by The Last Hoisan Poets

with music by Charlton Lee & Kathryn Bates

drawn from Jungyoon Wie's "Calm" and Huang Ruo's "A Dust in Time"

#### *My True Name (For Hung Liu)*

by Genny Lim

The artists would like to express their deepest gratitude to Jeff Kelley; Maria Egoavil, Rosario Sotelo, Devin Malone and the de Young Museum staff; Melanie Elvena, Diana Li & Shari deBoer and the members of the Asian American Women Artist Association (<https://www.aawaa.net/>) whose mission is to advance the visibility and recognition of Asian American women in the arts.

Production Team: Andi Wong, *Project Coordinator*

Megan Wong, *Production Assistant*, Christopher Wong, *Videographer*



Hung Liu at the opening of "*Hung Liu: Golden Gate* (金門)" at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, CA (Photo - Drew Altizer) Image courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Hung Liu's art will inspire and endure through time, because of its universality and humanism. Her subjects, from the Dancing Deer and personal renderings of ancient calligraphy, inspired by her immersion in the Buddhist cave murals of Dunhuang of the Gobi Desert as a young, graduate student and her journeys to sacred shrines and sites throughout China, were foundational in her spiritual approach to art. Liu's Portraits of Promised Lands elevate salt of the earth, common people, such as peasants, migrant laborers, orphaned children, refugees, prostitutes and outcasts and their struggles for survival in the face of poverty and often, political displacement and oppression, to heroic levels, as if to open our viewing eyes to see afresh, who these people really are for the very first time.

Liu's brush was guided by her words, "I want my work to be a comfort to people I've never known." It is this, this quality of empathy that exudes in each of her canvases, each stroke of her brush and each subject, whether animal, object or human, which makes her work transcendent.

As the wall or canvas is a form of empty space, painting as a means of transforming the world of suffering and pain into one of beauty and joy, exemplifies the Buddhist path of transformation and healing.

GENNY LIM, June 4, 2022

## The Diamond Sutra

Hidden away under eternal sky  
On a clear, cold night  
Dunhuang Temple moon  
where the ideogram for heart  
Is carved above the Cave of No Return  
Auspicious clouds dust a thousand caves  
Which are sealed or unsealed with  
the Diamond that cuts through all  
Wherever you come, wherever you go  
You hear the conch of the ocean's roar  
And the smell of samadhi's firewood  
Burning away worldly thought  
Kuan Yin, Goddess of Compassion  
lightly presses her finger  
Into the mudra of teaching  
And a thousand Buddhas appear in  
The clear light of the Perfection of Wisdom  
As above, so below  
Heaven and earth are bound  
*Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha*  
The moon holds up a branch of sky  
Over the quiet grottos  
Deer dance through desert walls  
Cicadas chirp the Prajnaparamita Sutra  
All night long in praise of emptiness  
*Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha*  
With age, the heart grows weak  
And the body decrepit  
But the heart of the Buddha retains  
The warmth of a thousand lamps  
Even as the painted lotus at her feet  
the five-jeweled crown on her head  
the Sangha of Arhats, Bodhisattvas  
Guardians, Dakinis and Deities fade  
Into the smoke of the human realm  
where samsara and never-ending war  
keep the Wheel of Yama  
Lord of Death, spinning, grinning  
The Buddha never gives up  
On a single being

Hung Liu's art, from small to huge canvases, crowns her dynamism as a woman of power and strength. Liu's art explodes and implodes; they are fireworks bursting against a night sky.

"Finding old photographs made me very excited," Liu says, many of which have inspired this brave soul to gift our world with her vibrant eye, her working fingers, her deep breaths of how art illuminates history which to her is a verb, not a noun.

Art, history and memory. Many of Liu's paintings emanate from black-and-white photographs. The colors come from memory, guided by her all-seeing eye. This is a woman who breathes history, utilizing drips and

### PANTOUM FOR THE WOMAN WHO LEFT CLOUD VILLAGE

(Based on *When I Was in Cloud Village*,  
a short story by Ding Ling, Chinese woman writer)

I travel barefooted to Cloud Village, your home  
I look for you, sister, among the women gossips  
Their eyes pierce through me, an American stranger  
The men eye me, curious, smoking cigarettes

I look for you, sister, among the women gossips  
An old auntie comes out to greet me  
The men eye me, curious, smoking cigarette  
She uses her cane to walk, her face, unlined

An old auntie comes out to greet me  
With a gap-toothed smile, auntie asks: "Ney hai been gaw ah?"  
She uses her cane to walk, her face, unlined  
Motions her daughter to serve me tea

With a gap-tooth smile, auntie asks: "Ney hai been gaw ah?"  
I sit down and write my Chinese name  
Motions her daughter to serve me tea  
Baby cries, clinging to her mother's back

I sit down and write my Chinese name  
This is my first visit to Cloud Village  
Baby cries, clinging to her mother's back  
Auntie pulls out an old, faded snapshot

washes, not as camouflage but as rain or tears inviting you to ponder, to think.'

"A world without ghosts," Hung Liu tells us, "is like a person without a shadow, an idealized yet impossible fantasy. The ghosts symbolize our rich, complicated, most times rather painful history and memory. Only after embracing the ghosts inside and outside us, we then have a better understanding of ourselves, our time, and our mission." Embracing the art of Hung Liu is to act, for she summons the ghosts for us.

— from *Summoning Ghosts - The Art of Painter Hung Liu*  
NELLIE WONG, October 2016

This is my first visit to Cloud Village  
A tall scar-faced woman smiles back at me  
Auntie pulls out an old, faded snapshot  
I study the water buffalo in the background

A tall, scar-faced woman smiles back at me  
I cannot be sure you truly are my sister  
I study the water buffalo in the background  
In the tall woman's hand seems to be a gourd

I cannot be sure you truly sure are my sister  
If I find you, I will say you were very brave  
In the tall woman's hand seems to be a gourd  
How many Japanese soldiers passed you hand to hand?

If I find you, I will say you were very brave  
Returning to your ancestral village after the war  
How many Japanese soldiers passed you hand to hand?  
The indignities you suffered I can only imagine

Returning to your ancestral village after the war  
Your once betrothed has married another  
The indignities you suffered I can only imagine  
Your name is unrecorded in the village book

Your once betrothed has married another  
I travel barefooted to Cloud Village, your home  
Your name is unrecorded in the village book  
Their eyes pierce through me, an American stranger

Nellie Wong  
© 1999 Nellie Wong

I first met Hung *Mei Mei*\* in the late 1990s when she (and her husband, Jeff Kelley) moved from Texas to Oakland. She was taking a teaching position in the art department of Mills College. At that time, I was working on a Festival 2000\*\* project so I invited her to present an award at a ceremony organized by the defunct Asian Heritage Council. That evening was the first time that I met her. Little did I know that Hung *Mei Mei*'s arrival in the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area would introduce me and others to her magnificence as an American artist born in China.

In Oakland, at the intersection of 51st and Shattuck, there is a just-completed mural titled *Love Letter to Oakland 2\*\*\** painted on the PG&E building honoring local older generation creators of art and culture. There, on that mural, is an imposing image of Hung *Mei Mei* whose left hand rises diagonally towards the brilliant radiance of the sun. Her right hand, clutching paint brushes, reaches downward in front of the Paramount Theater's light. Dandelions on her dress represent her inner beauty. Her perceptive eyes, full of compassion, gazes upward. Taking my time to slowly scrutinize the mural, I thought of Hung *Mei Mei* as a jewel in the lotus.

What is a lotus? It is an aquatic perennial rooted in the soil of a river or pond. On the surface of the water leaves float. A stain-free lotus, pushes through mud filled with nutrition, as it interfaces with the sun. Symbolizing strength, resilience, and rebirth, the lotus returns to the mud every night. The next day the lotus would re-emerge on its path towards the sun. Hung *Mei Mei*'s prolific artworks (treasured by the world) is like the continuing life cycle of a lotus. Her paintings shine brilliantly with colors and shapes. Her icon of circles proliferate. Drips of linseed oil wiggles downward, creating squiggly lines that bring life to memories of the human condition she had witnessed and studied in China and beyond. She iterated her heart-felt emotions about oppressed women and unseen children visually.

Throughout our years of friendship, my husband and I were blessed by the presence of this breathtaking artist and her husband, Jeff. When we saw one another every so often we laughed together. We shared dinners. We talked about family, our children. We treasured one another. In later years, I embraced her at the opening reception of her many exhibits, In August of 2021, she passed. This spring, I planted a red Chinese lantern shrub in my front yard to honor her and two other beautiful women who passed, my beloved sister Lai Webster and the dynamic Moira Roth. They, like Hung *Mei Mei*, reside in my heart. May Hung *Mei Mei*'s awakening spirit continue to bless me. May her awe-inspiring spirit continue to bless you.

**FLO OY WONG**  
June 27-29, 2022

\**Mei Mei* is Mandarin for little sister.

\*\*Festival 2000 was a San Francisco multicultural arts festival.

\*\*\* David Burke, Pancho Pescador, and Joevic Yeban painted the mural.

## They are the Rays of Her Sun *Tamen Shi Tai Yang de Guangmang*

*A poem opens up time. It opens up memory. It opens up place,  
The meaning of place. And so it's a doorway.*

Joy Harjo

In 2003, a taxi driver in Beijing, stops  
in a dense neighborhood of multiple  
apartment houses. He points to the one  
my husband and I are looking for  
in this neighborhood.

Getting out of the cab, we say, "*Hsieh,*  
*hsieh*, thank you."

The sun peers through the mist.

Confirming the address, we climb dimly-lit  
stairs of a multi-story apartment complex,  
stopping when we find the residence of Hung  
*Liu's Mama*.

My heart palpitating, I knock on the door.  
It opens. A shaft of light floods into the vestibule.  
Two women, both petite with salt and pepper hair  
wrapped in buns, stand before us.  
They are the mother and aunt of Hung Liu,  
American artist born in China.



Flo and Nellie visit the *Love Letter to Oakland 2* mural at the intersection of 51st Street and Shattuck Avenue in Oakland. Photo by Edward K. Wong.

They greet us with smiles.  
We break into laughter, my pre-primer Mandarin  
words muffled.  
Strands of cleanly-combed hair, crown their faces,  
illuminated by a streak of sunlight.  
Their twinkly eyes telegraph a warm welcome.  
I speak rusty *Putonghua*\* I learned years ago.  
They embrace us. Arms around their shoulders, we  
return their affection.  
Friendship blossoms like a lotus stretching  
towards the brilliance of the sun.  
At a recent dinner in Hung's Oakland home  
she asked me to take money to her Mama.  
I agreed.  
"Take crisp bills." She said. "Chinese don't  
like to receive crumpled dollar bills as gifts."

On the day of our visit in Beijing, sunlight  
threads the apartment.  
I give Hung's Mama a bag of oranges  
and immaculate American dollar bills, which  
she pockets immediately.  
I also give her our present - a *hoong bao*\*\*  
and another bag of oranges, symbols of good fortune.  
In quiet reverence, I say, "*Women gei ni*, we  
give you."  
Hung's Mama and her sister respond.  
"*Hsieh-hsieh, hsieh-hsieh*, thank you, thank you."

Once settled, my husband and I look at photos  
displayed on the walls.  
One shows Hung, her Mama, her aunt, arm-in-arm  
in the cozy apartment.  
Their coats, hats, and scarves speak of the cold.

Sunlight continues to light up the apartment.  
Hung's Mama then points to the nearby round table,  
saying, "*Zuo. Zuo*, sit, sit. *Chi wucan*, eat lunch."

The table's centerpiece is a gold cylindrical hot pot,  
*huo guoh*, fueled by chunks of coal.  
Dishes of fresh vegetable and assorted raw meats, thinly sliced, looking  
like a still-life painting, fill the table.  
We put ingredients in the nets. Our long-handled tools  
are placed in the savory and spicy broth.  
As the vegetables and meat bubble the broth turns golden  
with a pinch of brown. Pungent odors waft.  
My husband and I take our first bites of this luscious meal.  
“*Feichang hao chi*, very tasty,” I say between bites and sips of the broth.  
Hung’s Mama nods. Her eyes sparkle. Soon, we are sated.

*Mouthwatering food.  
Kindhearted hospitality.  
In the Beijing home of Hung's  
Mama*

Before long, it's time to depart. We say “*Zai Jian*,  
see you again.”  
We bow. They bow. It is then that I am struck  
by thoughts of Hung *Mei Mei*'s devotion to her Mama  
and her aunt.  
I am able to imagine their tender nurturing of her early  
life in China.

*Tamen shi tai yang de Guangmang.*  
They are the rays of her sun.  
*Tamen shi tai yang de Guanmang.*

**Flo Oy Wong**  
© 2022 Flo Oy Wong

\**Putonghua* is the common word for Mandarin.

\*\**Hoong bao* is a traditional red packet with money, given on special occasions.

## **SISTER HOODS**

**For Hung Liu**

Sipping tea, essence of peony, maitake, chicory and dandelion root  
Roots of Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh, roots  
of comfort women in their 90s standing up to violence  
against their bodies, their resistance afire, their minds strong  
demanding full accountability from the Japanese government.  
Sexual slavery the roots, the roots, webs of patriarchy  
enhanced, manipulated, denied.  
She paints and splashes with sure hands tears of clarity,  
fireflies and flowers, restoring dignity to their bodies, their eyes cloudy,  
then bright. Their bodies born whole, invaded, broken,  
mothers and daughters,  
sisters of the soil, sisters of sky intent on freedom.  
Three sisters, arm in arm, to our backs, sing lullabies and ditties,  
victories of building railroads, punctuating silences  
of noise, circles and circles, wearing hand-sewn shoes, moons  
of galaxy ancient and new, a thousand moons.  
Sisters with hammer and sickle, with hoes  
and pickaxes, with lassos with rope and pedals, windmills blending  
with sunlight, rhythms of labor, daughters sold.  
She births and rebirths, stands and bends, chops wood, gather herbs  
mends nets, wades rivers, teaches, anchoring tenacity  
of waterfalls and rivers, ocean where women soldiers  
fighting and drowning  
rather than succumb to bayonets of enemy soldiers.  
She, our painter. She, our photographer. She, our hero.  
She who rises through deed of art, seeding sister hoods  
of night-blooming cereus, hibiscus  
blooms festooning our hair, our skin, our horizons of light.

**Nellie Wong**

© 2022 Nellie Wong

## 姐妹 *Dei Moy*: Sisterhood is in the Heart

Sisterhood is in the heart - *Dei Moy*  
On our journey to an unknown destiny - *Dei Moy*  
Our voices ring loud. - *Dei Moy*  
Our voices ring proud. - *Dei Moy*

Sisterhood is in the heart - *Dei Moy*  
the pulse of morning, landscape of our dreams  
We plow and we scrape, we seed and create

Laughter fills our hearts,  
With joyful stories and songs  
Bequeathed to us since birth  
Tears fill our hearts  
Falling silent and free  
On our journey to an unknown destiny

Courage, like a gushing river, fills our hearts,  
Sending joy to moisten shores of living.  
Where strength, stamina, and resilience weave  
within breath of kindness of caring

Explore the map of mountains and plains,  
cascades and clay of red earth, cliffs  
of labor, fruit, linking generations,  
our feet on the ground.

We are women of the earth. - *Dei Moy*  
We are women of the sky. - *Dei Moy*  
We lift our lips to say,  
We are here.  
From Hoisan to Gim San.  
We are here.

Come. Hold our hands  
To create circles of love.  
We are allies . . .  
Our voices ring loud.  
Our voices ring proud.  
We are joyous  
in Sisterhood  
Sisterhood is in our hearts  
- *Dei Moy. Dei Moy. Dei Moy.*

Hung Liu's 2018 painting, "Sisterhood,"  
appeared on posters to encourage  
participation in the 2020 Census.  
<https://cometoyourcensus.us/hung-liu/>



## My True Name (For Hung Liu)

Don't ask me my true name  
Don't ask me the date of my birth or  
The place where I left my self behind  
Don't ask me if I'm a citizen, resident  
Alien, tourist, *ga-ji*  
Paper Daughter or other  
Like the stars in the heavens  
I am not other than I  
You only glimpse the shadow of me  
The air between our breaths  
In the life of men, boundaries shift  
with the stroke of a pen  
Don't ask me my true identity  
My memory is forged  
Once my passport was handed me  
My journey between worlds expired  
I was free to leave my life behind  
I was free to dream who I was  
But lineage is stronger than  
Hollow bamboo, *juk sing*  
And my blood, the color of  
*Heung-ha* red clay  
Don't call me by my true name  
Unless you know all my names  
*Hu-jih-nui, Bee nui, Moy-Moy*  
*Dei-Dei, Pau-Pau, Thlel -kim*  
Mother, daughter, sister  
*Pahng-yiu*, friend  
Until you cross the bridge with me  
Until you walk with me  
And let my shadow go before me  
Until you remember the stories  
History forgets  
You can't dot the missing "I" in  
My true name

**Genny Lim**

© 2022 Genny Lim



The Last Hoisan Poets: Nellie Wong, Flo Oy Wong, and Genny Lim. Photo: Megan Wong

**THE LAST HOISAN POETS** – Genny Lim, Nellie Wong, and Flo Oy Wong – trace their roots to China's Hoisan villages, home of the Hoisan-wa (a.k.a. Toisanese/Taishanese) Chinese dialect. They conduct special poetry readings in English and Hoisan-wa, to pay homage to their mother language which is at risk of fading from collective memory.

<https://thelasthoisanpoets.ddns.net/>

**Genny Lim** is the recipient of two lifetime achievement literary awards from PEN Oakland and the city of Berkeley. She has also served as San Francisco Jazz Poet Laureate and former SF Arts Commissioner. Lim's award-winning play, *Paper Angels*, the first Asian American play to air on PBS's *American Playhouse* in 1985, has been performed throughout the U.S., Canada and China. She is author of five poetry collections, *Winter Place*, *Child of War*, *Paper Gods and Rebels*, *KRA!*, *La Morte Del Tempo*, and co-author, with the late Him Mark Lai and Judy Yung, of *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island*, winner of the American Book Award in 1980. Lim has worked with past Jazz legends, such as Max Roach and long-time collaborators, Jon Jang, John Santos, Francis Wong and Anthony Brown. She is a member of *The Last Hoisan Poets*, who recently collaborated with Del Sol Quartet in the *United States of Asian America Festival 2022*.

**Flo Oy Wong**, co-founder of the San Francisco-based Asian American Women Artists Association (AAWAA), is an artist/poet/educator. A recipient of three National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awards, she was a visiting artist at various colleges and universities. Articles about her art are published in multiple publications. Growing up in Oakland Chinatown, she spoke her family's ancestral dialect, Hoisan-wa. In 2018, Flo published her art and poetry book, *Dreaming of Glistening Pomelos* (Amazon), inspired by her childhood. Now, a member of *The Last Hoisan Poets*, she frequently reads with sister poets Genny Lim and Nellie Wong.

**Nellie Wong** has published four books: *Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park*, *The Death of Long Steam Lady*, *Stolen Moments* and *Breakfast Lunch Dinner*. Her poems and essays appear in numerous journals and anthologies, including *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*, the foundational text of women of color feminism edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Among her many recognitions, excerpts from two poems have been permanently installed at public sites at the San Francisco Municipal Railway and a building at Oakland High School is named after her. She's co-featured in the documentary film, *Mitsuye and Nellie Asian American Poets*. A poem of hers was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She's traveled to China in the First American Women Writers Tour with Alice Walker, Tillie Olsen and Paule Marshall, among others. She's taught poetry writing at Mills College and in Women Studies at the University of Minnesota.



Charlton Lee and Kathryn Bates. Photo: RJ Munra

and produces vibrant productions and educational experiences. Charlton & Kathryn have been the powerful team behind the Quartet's recent "Angel Island Project." [delsolquartet.com](http://delsolquartet.com)

The energetic duo - **Charlton Lee** and **Kathryn Bates** - make music together as founding violist and long-time cellist of the Del Sol Quartet. The internationally-acclaimed quartet is a leading force in the Bay Area music scene, championing music by living artists that explores aspects of social change, technology, and artistic innovation. Del Sol has premiered thousands of works, released 12 albums,